

PART II

WALLA WALLA COUNTY POPULATION

Geographically, the population of Walla Walla County is very unequally distributed. The majority of the people live in the southern part of the county in the Walla Walla River Valley and adjoining lowland areas. Thin population belts extend along the bottomlands of the Touchet River and Dry Creek. Scattered settlement exists in the western and central parts of the county. Human occupancy is least in the northern part of the county.

Population Growth

The growth of Walla Walla County was slow prior to 1870. Lack of roads and long distance from the East kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility also prevented settlement in most parts of eastern Washington prior to 1858. According to the Census, there were 5,300 persons living in Walla Walla County in 1870.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1900. New transcontinental railroads brought large numbers of immigrants from the East and Europe. The extension of railroads into Walla Walla County stimulated rapid population growth and encouraged expansion. By the turn of the century, the county population was 18,680.

The period 1900 to 1910 was a decade of rapid population growth in which the county gained 13,251 people, increasing more than 41 percent to a total of 31,931 persons. New inhabitants took advantage of the many opportunities in commerce and industry as well as in farming. The development of irrigation in the area enabled agriculture to support more people.

Between 1910 and 1940, the county's population decreased. Low prices, depression in the wheat market and farm mechanization during this period resulted in a surplus of labor in the county. Population dropped to 27,539 in 1920. Even in 1940, there were fewer people (30,547) in Walla Walla County than in 1910.

Since 1940, the number of inhabitants has continued to increase. New food processing industries, diversified irrigation agriculture and a general upward trend in commercial activity in the county prompted rapid population growth. Local increase in population also resulted from large government projects at nearby Richland and from the construction of McNary Dam. The number of people in the county grew from 30,547 in 1940 to 40,135 in 1950 and to 42,195 in 1960. In 1960, Walla Walla County accounted for 1.5 percent of the state population of 2,853,214.

Urban and Rural Population

Until 1880, Walla Walla County was entirely rural with all persons living in cities or villages under 2,500 persons, on farms or in country residences. In 1880, the city of Walla Walla reached a population of about 3,588 persons, becoming the only place in the county classified as urban (i.e., over 2,500 persons) by the Census. Of Walla Walla County's population in 1880, 58.8 percent was rural and 41.2 percent was urban.

By 1900, over half of the county's population (53.7 percent) was urban. The percentage of rural population decreased and the urban population grew until 1910. During the two decades between 1910 and 1930, the urban proportion of the

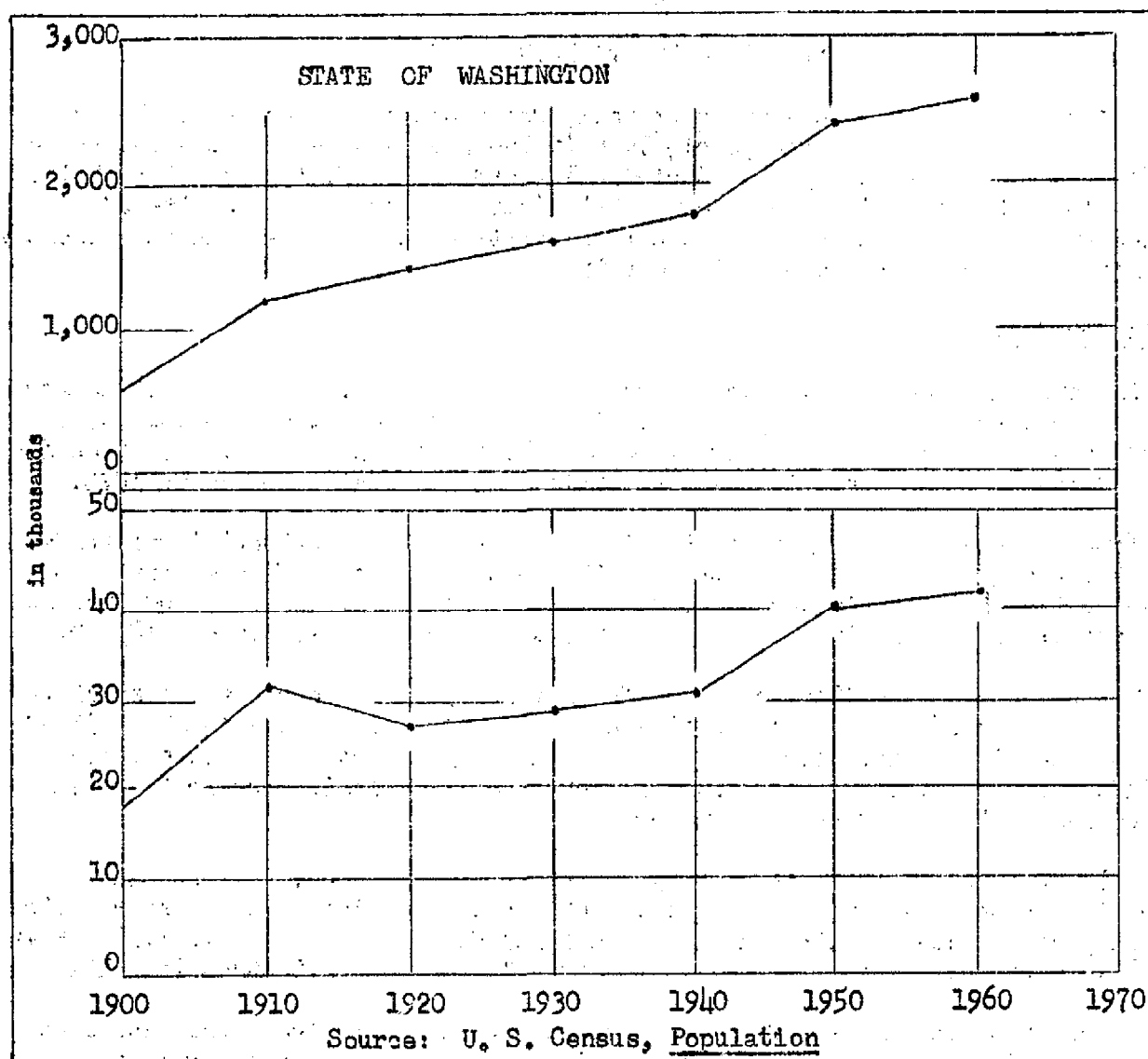


Figure 1. Population Trends: 1900-1960

Table 2. Population of Walla Walla County, 1870-1960

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1870	5,300	100	0
1880	8,716	58.8	41.2
1890	12,224	61.5	38.5
1900	18,680	46.3	53.7
1910	31,931	39.4	60.6
1920	27,539	43.8	56.2
1930	28,441	43.8	56.2
1940	30,547	40.7	59.3
1950	40,135	32.0	68.0
1960	42,195	32.3	67.7

Source: U. S. Census, Population

county population dropped from 60.6 to 56.2 percent. This was caused by a decline in the population of the city of Walla Walla and the movement of people out of the county to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. Since 1940, the percentage of urban population has again moved upward. In 1950, College Place, with a population of 3,174, joined the city of Walla Walla's 24,102 persons to make up the county's total urban population. By 1960, the two urban places had a total population of 25,546, accounting for about 68 percent of the county figure of 42,195 persons.

In 1960, the rural population was predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 10,028 persons who lived in small towns or in the country but not on farms. The rural-nonfarm persons represented 73.6 percent of the total rural population.

Rural-farm population has decreased in the three decades between 1930 and 1960. Persons living on farms numbered 6,730 in 1930, 6,102 in 1940, 4,881 in 1950 and 3,600 in 1960. The drop in farm population between 1950 and 1960 represents a decline of 26.2 percent. In 1960, Walla Walla ranked seventeenth among the counties of Washington in farm population. Both farms and people living on farms are becoming fewer, whereas the production of farm products continues to increase. Walla Walla County finds itself in a period when technology fashions economic and social changes.

Table 3. Population of Incorporated Places
Walla Walla County, 1910-1960

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
College Place	--	--	--	1,272	3,174	4,031
Prescott	502	559	275	324	244	269
Waitsburg	1,237	1,174	869	936	1,015	1,010
Walla Walla	19,364	15,503	15,976	18,109	24,102	24,536

Source: U. S. Census, Population

There are four incorporated places in Walla Walla County. The city of Walla Walla has shown consistent growth since 1920. With a population of 24,536, it ranked ninth in size among Washington cities in 1960. Aside from being the county seat of Walla Walla County, the city is also the major trade and cultural center for southeastern Washington. The more recently established city of College Place has also shown a population increase. It rose from 1,272 persons in 1940 to 4,031 in 1960. College Place is mainly a residential area and an educational center located to the southwest of the city of Walla Walla.

Waitsburg's population has increased since 1930 but in more recent years it has leveled off at around 1,000 persons. Prescott, on the other hand, has declined in population since 1940 from 324 residents to only 269 in 1960. Both Waitsburg and Prescott are farming centers located in the Touchet River Valley. The combined population of the four incorporated places amounted to 29,846 in 1960, representing 70.7 percent of the total county population.

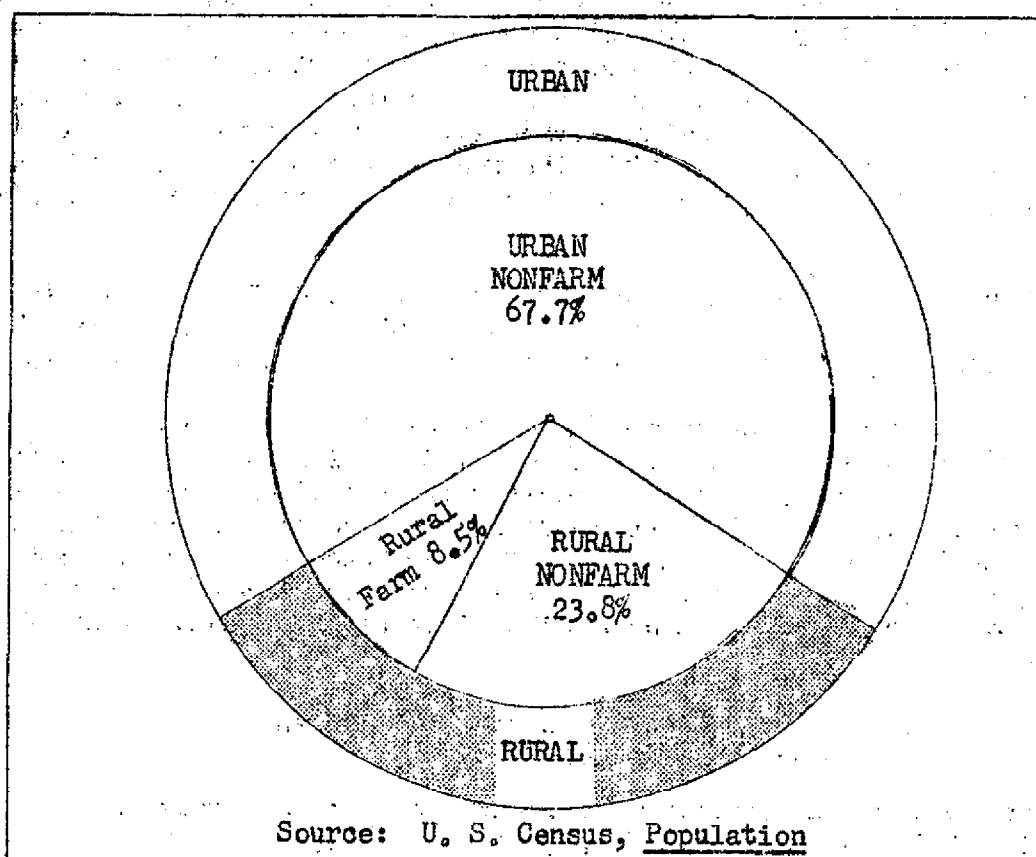


Figure 2. Urban and Rural Population, Walla Walla County, 1960.

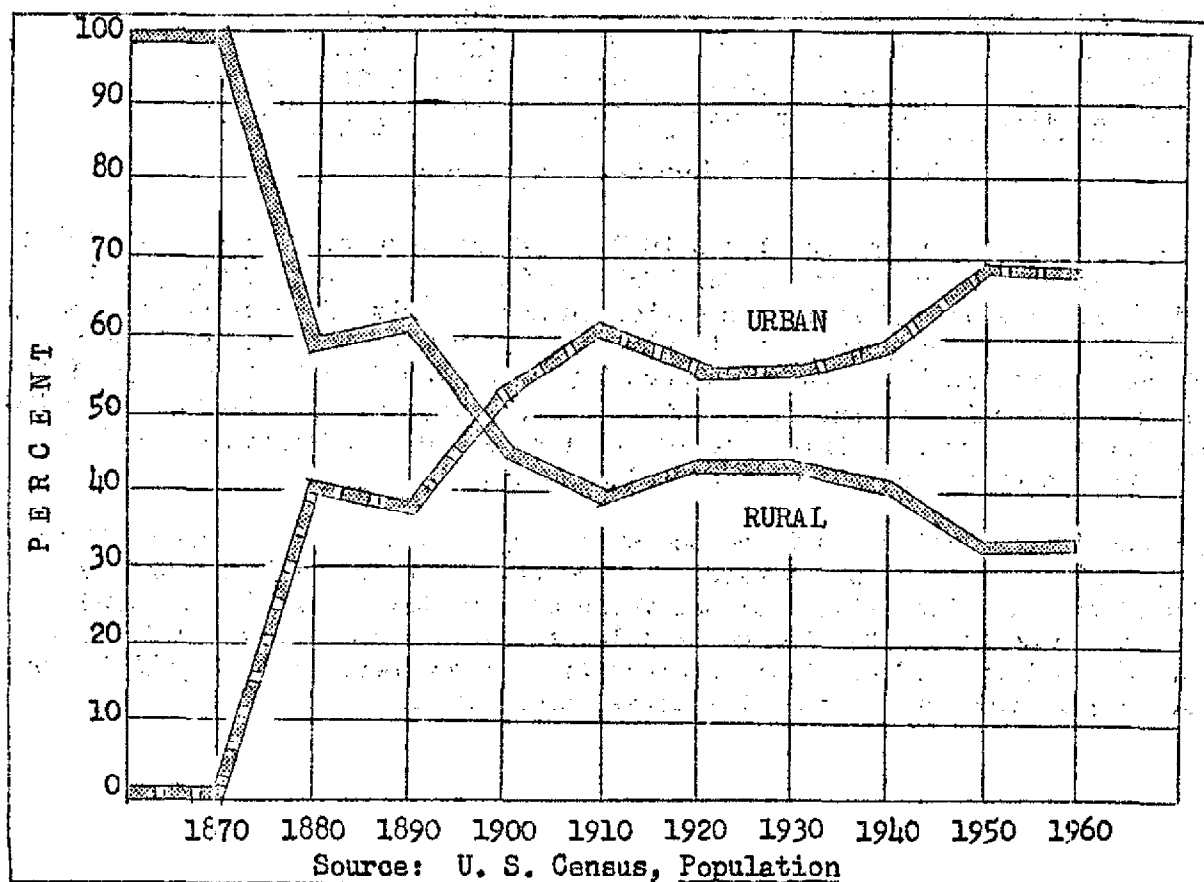


Figure 3. Rural and Urban Population Trends, Walla Walla County, 1870-1960.

Population Characteristics

Typical of many counties of the western United States, Walla Walla County has been a melting pot of immigrants from many foreign lands. Free homesteads, low land prices and the productivity of the land attracted many immigrants from agricultural regions of midwestern United States, Canada and Europe. Nearly 19 percent of the population in 1890 was foreign-born. Immigration from foreign lands decreased sharply after 1924 because of a restrictive quota system established by Congress.

In 1960, foreign-born persons residing in Walla Walla County numbered 7,490 and represented only 4.2 percent of the total population. The five largest foreign-born groups were English, German, Italian, Spanish and Chinese. In 1960, about 17.8 percent of the county inhabitants were of foreign stock (all first and second generations). There were 7,496 persons of foreign stock in the county in 1960.

The nonwhite population of Walla Walla County was 713, according to the Census of 1960. Races included 380 Negroes, 131 Indians, 91 Chinese, 69 Japanese and 8 Filipino. Nonwhite residents represented 1.7 percent of the total county population in 1960.

Table 4. Employment of the Population
Walla Walla County, 1960

Types of Employment	Total Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	15,987
Agriculture	1,850
Forestry and Fisheries . . .	16
Mining	8
Construction	1,589
Manufacturing	1,733
Transportation, Communications and other Public Utilities .	1,020
Retail and Wholesale Trade .	3,194
Miscellaneous Services . . .	5,156
Public Administration (govern- ment employment)	959
Other employment	462

Source: U. S. Census of Population

In 1960, a total of 15,987 persons were employed in the county. Miscellaneous services and retail and wholesale trade were the two leading types of employment. The Census counted 5,156 working in miscellaneous services covering many trades and 3,194 in retail and wholesale trade. Agriculture was third in number of employed persons with 1,850. Those making a living in agriculture represented 11.6 percent of all self-employed and employed persons in the county. The Census enumerated 1,733 working for a living in manufacturing, making it fourth in rank. A large segment of the manufacturing employment was in the food processing, lumber, wood products, printing and publishing industries. Also of relative importance in the number of persons employed was construction with 1,589, transportation,

communications and other public utilities with 1,020 and public administration with 959. Forestry and mining were very minor occupations in 1960. The pattern of employment results from the large number of persons working in the city of Walla Walla in commercial and service trades serving an extensive agricultural area which includes southwestern Washington and northeastern Oregon.

According to the 1930 Census, there were 115 males per 100 females in Walla Walla County. In 1960, the county's population consisted of 21,789 males and 20,406 females, which was a ratio of 107 males per 100 females. The number of women relative to men tends to increase as the county becomes older and more settled. Other factors such as war and industrialization also tend to increase the proportion of women. In 1960, rural men numbered 6,932 and rural women 6,696--a ratio of 103 males per 100 females.

Walla Walla County's population is slowly aging. The percentage of older people has been increasing steadily since 1870. The 1930 Census showed that only 7.4 percent of the people in the county were 65 years and older, whereas in 1960, they accounted for 11.5 percent of the total. Improved health practices and greater medical knowledge have played an important part in lengthening the life span. In 1960, the largest age groups were those of children under 4 years of age and those between 5 and 9 years old. Children under 15 years of age accounted for 36 percent of the county's population.

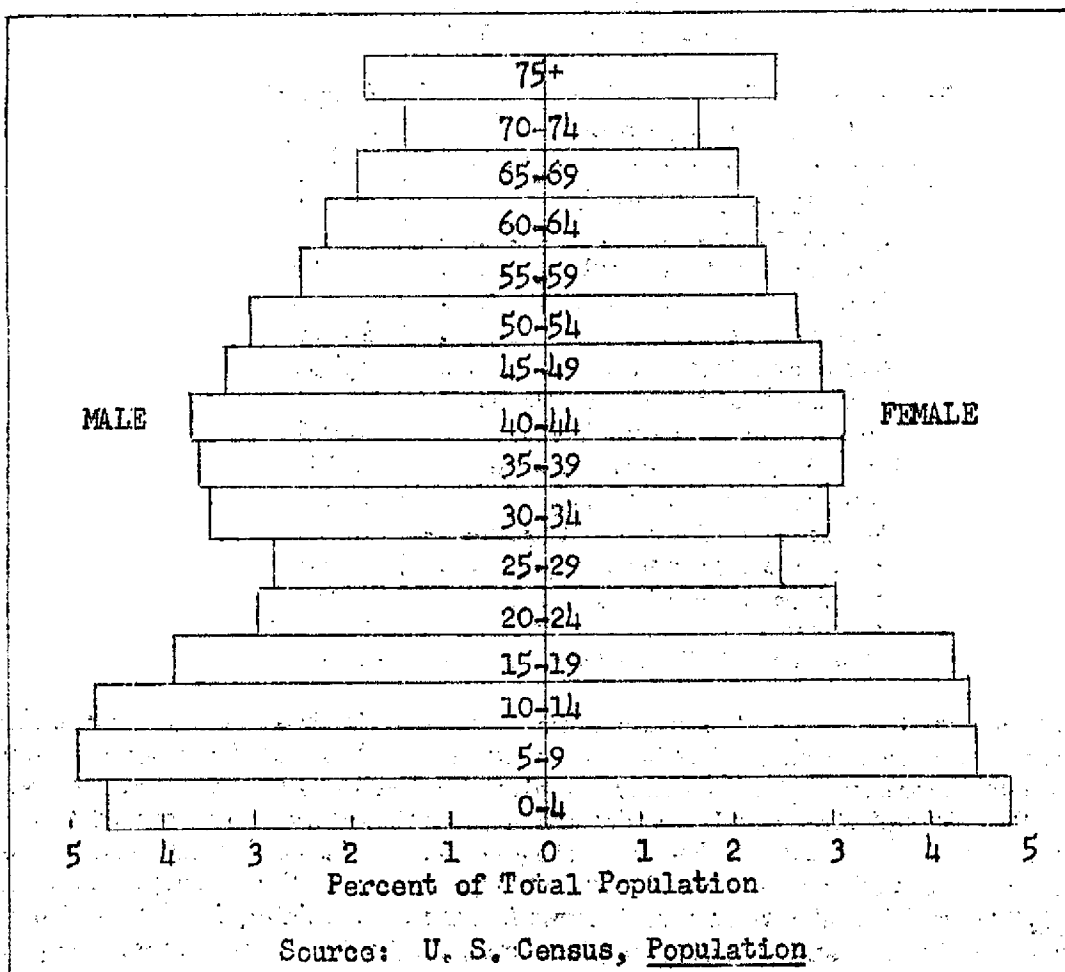


Figure 4. Age Distribution of Population, Walla Walla County, 1960.